

ROYAL PADDOCKS ALLOTMENTS, HAMPTON WICK

Minutes of the annual meeting of the Management Committee, held on Thursday 22 November 2018 at 8pm at 82 Langham Road, Teddington TW11 9HJ

Present: Councillors Jim Millard and Monica Saunders

Plot holder representatives: David Harnden (Plot holders' Committee chair), Andrew Stanley (Plot holders' Committee treasurer), Nick Baylis, Susan Saunders, Janet Baylis (Management Committee secretary)

Apologies: Councillor Robin Brown

1. Welcome from Plot holders' Committee chair: David Harnden thanked newly-elected Councillors Jim Millard and Monica Saunders for agreeing to be our nominated representatives from Richmond Borough Council and for attending the meeting. He also welcomed Andrew Stanley to his first meeting as newly appointed Plot holders' Committee Treasurer. David briefed newcomers on the history and constitution of the Royal Paddocks Allotments; the purpose of the Committee; the role of Councillors in approving rent increases and acting as independent adjudicators should a plot holder appeal an eviction.

2. Election of officers: Chair: David Harnden proposed Nick Baylis. Joint Vice-chairs: David Harnden proposed Jim Millard and Monica Saunders. Janet Baylis agreed to continue in the role as Secretary. The meeting agreed unanimously to these appointments.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2017: The minutes were considered by those who had been present (Plot holders David Harnden, Susan Saunders and Janet Baylis). They were agreed to be a true record (proposer David Harnden, seconded by Susan Saunders and Janet Baylis).

4. Matters arising from the minutes: Susan Saunders asked about the AOB item and if there had been an approach from the disgruntled plot holder evicted from the Hampton allotments. David Harnden was able to confirm that no approach had been made. She also asked if there had been any take-up of the £10 plot number scheme. There wasn't but most plot holders not displaying a number on their plots have now complied. Jim Millard asked about the boundaries of the catchment area for applications for a plot.

5. Plot holders' Committee chairman's annual report: David Harnden, chair of the Plot holders' Committee, reported.

David summarised the year's activities and achievements and gave a vote of thanks to our volunteers who do so much to sustain the allotment community in so many ways. These include: the Plot holders' Committee; the Social Committee, who organise and run our social activities; café volunteers; plot inspections team; the website; the pumps, gates and hedge-laying volunteers; annual rent renewal and lettings to new plot holders; maintenance of the beehive area and pollinator beds.

David specially thanked Ashley Catto who stepped down from the Committee after many years service. He will continue to lead the gates team.

David highlighted the community plot initiative which was new in 2018. Nick and Dave, local Met police officers, have made a good start in taking over a rundown plot with involvement from local people. They are both active volunteers in social events including café on Sunday mornings.

A controversial issue this year was the decision taken by the committee to ban bonfires. David acknowledged this, but explained that there was a number of reasons which had informed the ban. It is not the intention to ban burning completely as the old brick incinerator will be replaced with a more-efficient model. Advice has been taken from LBRUT and we also sought out best practice from the RHS. Guy Barter, RHS Chief Horticultural Advisor, recently gave a talk on composting and alternatives to burning at the Seed Store to a packed audience. There was an opportunity to discuss the ban at the 2018 AGM with a clear majority of those present supported the committee decision.

David handed over to Nick Baylis to report on the roads project.

The tracks at the allotments have deteriorated due to car use to the extent that the Plotolders Committee has decided to bring them up to a better standard. Our priority is to sort out the Entrance area, which seems to have got noticeably worse in the last couple of years, with substantial 'ponding', and also to ensure better access to the Seed Store. We have three contractor proposals, but whatever we do is expensive. Our preferred option would cost about £24,000. There is a wide variety of opinion about cars on the allotments and how much they should be tolerated. We will put details about the proposals on the website to seek plotholders opinions and feedback, with a view to agreeing actions at the Plotolders' Committee meeting in January.

There was a vote of thanks to the Chair from Susan Saunders.

6. Plotholders' Committee treasurer's annual report: Andrew Stanley, Treasurer of the Plotholders' Committee reported.

Andrew has recently agreed to take-over as Treasurer from Carol Dukes, who stepped down last year. He and Carol will have a handover period once Carol returns from Spain. Andrew reported that allotment finances are in good shape with a net surplus of £9000 for the year to 30 September 2018 with nearly £40000 in the bank. As usual main sources of income came from rents (£5700), café (£3000+) and Social events (£1400+). In addition, a one-off payment of £700 came from a fashion shoot on the plots for a feature in the Mail on Sunday You magazine.

A five-year capital income/expenditure plan has been drawn up by Karen Saywell which will guide routine, maintenance and project expenditure up to 2023. Major projects for 2019 include the road repairs/ upgrade and a replacement incinerator. These 2 projects have been costed at an expected spend of £30000 but will bring big improvements to the allotment environment for all plotholders.

7. Date of next annual meeting: The next annual meeting will be held at 8 pm on Thursday 21 November 2019, location to be decided nearer the time.

8. Any other business:

Susan Saunders reported that the person responsible for cutting back several saplings which were to form part of the laid hedge at the back of plots alongside Church Grove Passage has confessed. Apparently, she wasn't aware that they had been planted for this purpose.

Janet Baylis drew attention to Jenny Bourne's Nature Blog on the RPA website home page and suggested that we give it more publicity. Recently, she did a piece on RHS expert Guy Barter's informative talk to ploholders on all matters composting, including more environmental alternatives to bonfires such as building a dead hedge.

Janet Baylis suggested that the committee should consider planning how to celebrate the centenary of the RPA allotments. The land we occupy was granted by Royal Warrant in 1921 although allotments were under cultivation on the site from 1918 (source: contemporary reporting from Surrey Comet).

David Harden raised the issue of water supply, the impact of climate change and problems with the pumps. He has already made a start on research into alternative methods of water provision and we'll be looking to establish a taskforce to take this forward next year.